

Sharp-tailed Grouse Harvest 2003

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Abstract

A change to the permit issuing process was initiated in 2003. A sharp-tailed grouse permit application was not included in the Patron License Package. Anyone who wanted to apply for a sharp-tail permit had to pay a \$3 application fee; which consequently caused fewer hunters to apply and many hunters received 2 or 3 tags.

During the 2003 hunting season, five hundred and twenty seven (527) hunters applied for 1,240 permits in four different sharp-tailed grouse management units (deer management units) in the northwestern portion of the state. The hunters harvested 78 birds, an increase of 73% from the 2002 harvest.

Methods

A change to the sharp-tailed grouse permit application took effect in 2003, when the sharp-tailed grouse permit application was not included in the Patron License Package. All hunters that wanted to apply for a sharp-tail permit were required to pay a \$3 application fee, consequently fewer hunters applied. Applicants were required to apply for permits based on deer management unit boundaries. Permit levels were set by the DNR, based on sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground surveys in the spring of 2003. All permits were mailed to hunters prior to the start of the hunting season. After harvesting a sharp-tailed grouse, the hunter was required to record the date of kill and the deer management unit of kill on the registration stub, and mail it back to the DNR in Madison.

Results

Five hundred and twenty seven (527) hunters applied for sharp-tailed harvest permits in four deer management units across the northwestern part of the state. Deer management units that were open to hunting are shown in Figure 1. One thousand two hundred and forty permits (1,240) were issued in 2003, an 18% increase from 2002. Thirty-four hunters (34) did not receive a permit because they applied for a unit that was not open to hunting. Harvest permit distribution is shown in Table 1.

The 2003 sharp-tailed grouse season was held from 18 October through 9 November 2003. Reported harvest as recorded on returned hunter registration stubs was 78 birds. This was much higher than the last sharp-tailed grouse harvest of 45 birds in 2002 (Figure 2). No estimate of hunter compliance was attempted. Therefore, actual harvest of sharp-tailed grouse was probably higher. The deer management unit with the highest sharp-tailed grouse harvest was 10, with 33 birds taken (Table 1). Permit success was highest in unit 8 at 19.0%. Success rates are not corrected for non-hunters.

The increased harvest numbers are likely the result of three factors: additional hunting permits, types of hunters that applied for permits, and an increase in sharp-tailed grouse population numbers. The dancing ground surveys done in the spring of 2003 indicated a 5% increase in population size from 2002. With increased hunting area, additional hunters, and a higher

population of grouse, killing a grouse from the scattered sharp-tailed grouse population was easier for hunters.

Most of the harvest occurred during opening weekend. Harvest on weekends generally surpassed weekday harvest. A full account of date of harvest can be found in Table 2.

Table 1. *Sharp-tailed grouse permit distribution, harvest and permit success, 2003.*

Unit	Permits Issued*	Harvest	% Success
2	720	23	3.2%
8	100	19	19.0%
9	220	3	1.4%
10	200	33	16.5%

*Includes 1st, 2nd, and 3rd tags.

Table 2. *Sharp-tailed grouse harvest by date, 2003 (Bolded dates indicate weekends).*

Date of Kill	Number
10/18/2003	32
10/19/2003	7
10/20/2003	3
10/21/2003	1
10/22/2003	3
10/23/2003	1
10/24/2003	3
10/25/2003	5
10/26/2003	8
10/27/2003	0
10/28/2003	2
10/29/2003	0
10/30/2003	0
10/31/2003	3
11/01/2003	1
11/02/2003	0
11/03/2003	1
11/04/2003	0
11/05/2003	2
11/06/2003	0
11/07/2003	1
11/08/2003	1
11/09/2003	4

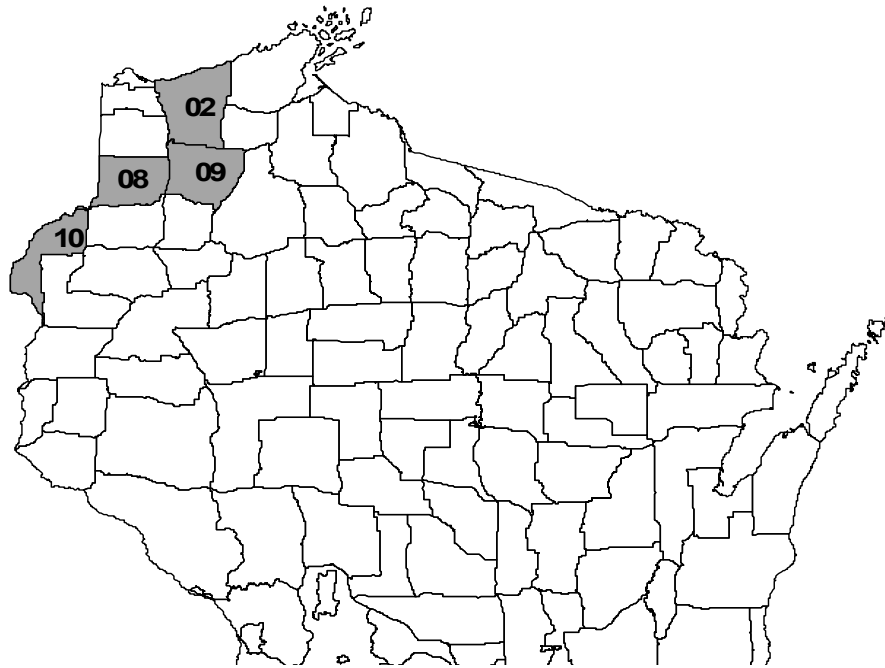


Figure 1. Shaded deer management units were open to sharp-tail hunting in 2003.

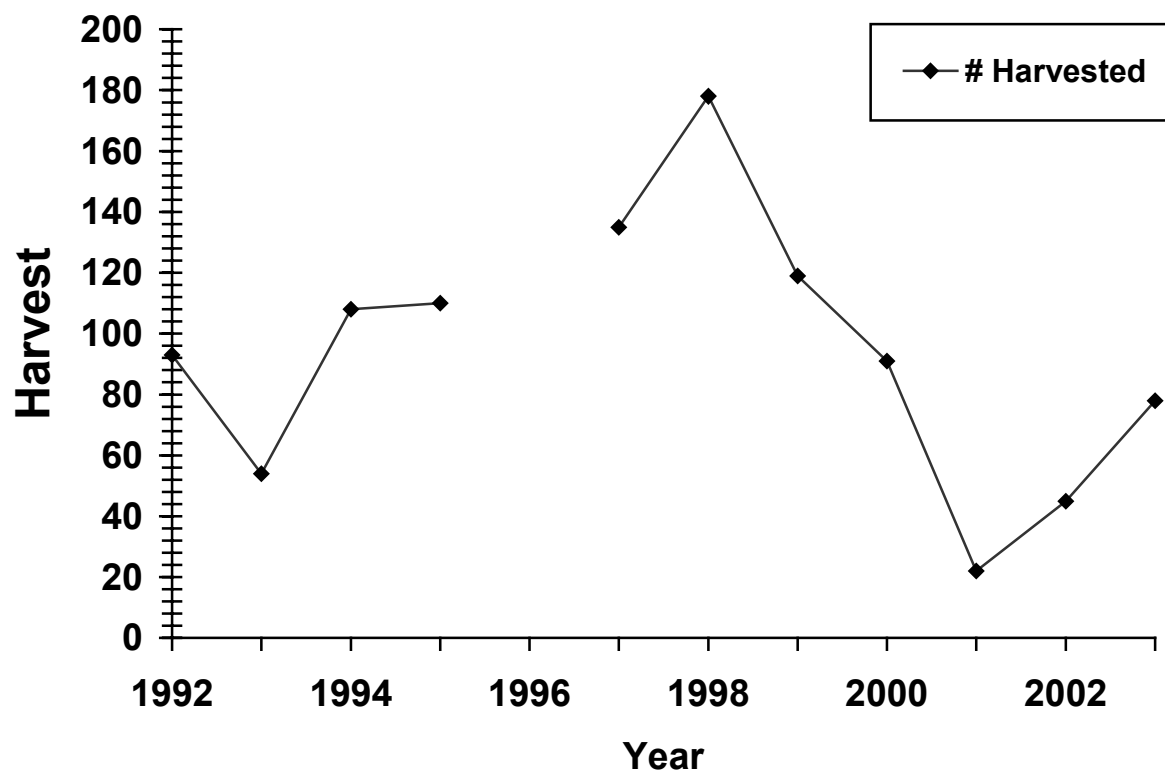


Figure 2. Sharp-tailed grouse harvest, 1992-2003.